

SOFT SHORE PROTECTION PERMITTING



Soft shore protection is a method to protect property from shoreline erosion by utilizing natural materials, such as gravel, sand, logs or roots. Beaches with soft shore protection have a more natural appearance, provide easier access to the beach for recreation, provide important habitat for nearshore species, and protect the health of Puget Sound.

Do I Need a Permit?

Yes. Soft shore protection, while mimicking natural processes, is a form of “non-structural shoreline stabilization” and still legally requires regulatory review.

Application Materials

This is a basic list of application materials for most cases.
See County staff for more detailed requirements.

- Completed Shoreline Exemption Form R-1 permit application:
 - Name, address and phone number for applicant, representative, and property owner
 - Location of the property
 - Name of the shoreline or water body that triggers review
 - General description of the proposed project
 - General description of the property as it now exists
 - A site development plan with maps and elevation drawings
- SEPA Environmental Checklist
- Biological Site Assessment
(not required for like-for-like replacements)
- Geocoastal Report (not required for like-for-like replacements)
demonstrating:
 - Why less impactful measures aren't feasible
 - That shoreline erosion is likely to damage a structure in the next three years, or that waiting will require you to pursue a more impactful alternative
 - That the project will not adversely affect neighboring properties
- Soft shore protection designs may include elements seaward of the ordinary high watermark (OHWM). If the project is at or below the OHWM, a Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) will be required

The Least Impactful Alternative

Your proposed shoreline stabilization must be designed to minimize interruption of fish and wildlife habitats by using the least impactful alternative practicable.

Shoreline stabilization strategies from least impactful to most impactful:

1. No action (allowing the shoreline to retreat naturally)
2. Upland drainage control
3. Vegetation protection, enhancement, and replacement
4. Relocation of structures or improvements (e.g. drainfields)
5. Beach nourishment
6. Large woody material placement
7. Soft shore protection methods
8. Upland retaining walls
9. Bulkheads and rock revetments placed landward of the ordinary high water mark (OHWM)
10. Individual rock placement located at the OHWM
11. Bulkheads and rock revetments located at the OHWM



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Permitting Process

Shoreline permits for soft shore protection are typically issued within 60-90 days of an application, but may take up to 120 days for review. The permitting process is the following:

1. Applicant completes application and schedules appointment
2. If application is deemed complete, applicant pays fee
3. Materials routed to other Island County and Washington departments as required
4. Applicant notified by letter to pick up public notice sign (Public notice period of 2 weeks)
5. If more information or corrections are needed, applicant will be notified with a review letter (review clock stops)
6. Staff decision/permit is issued (Appeal period of 2 weeks)
7. Permit becomes effective if appeal is not filed

Contact County Staff

Every shoreline situation is unique. While the strategies mentioned here may work on your property, you should seek professional advice and be sure to apply for the appropriate permits.

Check with Island County Planning & Community Development (360-679-7339) to address questions specific to your property, and confirm policies, regulations, and required permits.



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Soft Shore Protection Project



Resources

Permitting

- Planning Department Applications page, Shoreline Exemption R-1: www.islandcountywa.gov/planning/pages/land_use.aspx
- Planning Department Fee Schedule: www.islandcountywa.gov/Planning/Pages/fees.aspx
- Planning Department Shorelines page: www.islandcountywa.gov/planning/pages/shorelines.aspx

Soft Shore Protection

- Encyclopedia of Puget Sound, Shoreline Armoring: www.eopugetsound.org/terms/125
- Green Shores for Homes: www.greenshoresforhomes.org
- Shore Friendly: www.shorefriendly.org
- Shore Stewards – Reducing Erosions and Landslides: www.shorestewards.cw.wsu.edu/guidelines/guideline-5/
- Your Marine Waterfront: www.shorefriendly.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Your-Marine-Waterfront-web-version.pdf